



CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: January 1 – March 31, 2005

**REGIONAL: Middle East Women's Campaign Training (04853-4)
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00**

**Project dates: February 15, 2004 to September 15, 2005
Total budget: \$1,000,000.00 Total spent to date: 487,766.97**

I. SUMMARY

The inclusion of women is essential to the promotion of democratic change in the Middle East and North Africa. Such inclusion not only leads to increased participation in the electoral process and therefore greater “power at the polls” but also ensures the dispersion of power that is an intrinsic element of a democratic system. Elections in most of the region are spread out over the 2004-2007 period, providing the opportunity to support prospective women candidates and activists in playing a more visible role in society. This is particularly true in Egypt, Lebanon, and the West bank and Gaza Strip where parliamentary elections slated for 2005 provide an ideal laboratory to refine the methods for increasing women's political participation so they may be applied on a regional scale.

Despite the prevalence of women's organizations and the professional accomplishments of women, Lebanese women rarely run for or win local or national office and are conspicuously absent from the country's government and political processes. Although Lebanese women generally enjoy a high level of education, they are underrepresented in the government, accounting for only 2.3 percent of parliamentarians. Access to the political realm remains limited by the inability to overcome social constraints and the historically fractious nature of the women's movement. Recent developments in the Arab world and positive signs of coordination among women's organizations in Lebanon indicated, however, that the 2005 parliamentary elections may provide a springboard for efforts to improve the political status of Lebanon's female population.

With the overall goal of increasing the ability of Arab women to play an active role in politics and galvanize support for women's involvement in the political decision-making process, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) is conducting a program that seeks to build the capacity of women activists from the Middle East and North Africa to

wage professional and credible campaigns at the national, regional, or local level and advocate for political reforms.

During this reporting period, NDI conducted three major training workshops as part of its “Win with Women Campaign Schools” series:

- Lebanon Women Campaign School (Beirut, February 24-26)
- Advanced Communication Skills Workshop (Beirut, March 12-13)
- Levant Regional Women Campaign School (Amman, March 28-April 1)

In Lebanon and Jordan, NDI noted significant improvements in participants’ performance throughout the campaign school series. Participants were very motivated and appreciated the quality of the expert trainers involved and the methodologies applied during the workshops. However, some participants felt that there was a lack of Arabic-speaking trainers well versed in modern campaign methods and that training sessions should be specifically tailored to their country of origin. During the next reporting period, NDI will provide additional technical assistance to participants running for elected office in 2005.

II. BACKGROUND

From 2005 to 2007, elections in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa will present a unique opportunity for those female activists interested in gaining a meaningful voice in political society through peaceful, democratic means to make themselves heard through the ballot box. With the exception of the United Arab Emirates, each country in the region has recently held or will soon hold elections at the national, regional, or local level, and in most cases, women have or will have the opportunity to play a larger role in the elections than ever before. In Yemen, for example, 36 women were elected to local councils in 2001. Bahrain held its first parliamentary and municipal elections in 25 years in 2002, and for the first time, women were permitted to run as candidates. In September of that year, 35 women were elected to the Moroccan Parliament, and Jordan followed suit with the historic election of six women to their national legislature in 2003.

Upcoming elections elsewhere in the region, particularly in Lebanon, present additional openings for women into the political system. Parliamentary elections slated for May 2005 provide an opportunity to revive the Lebanese women’s movement derailed since the country’s 1975 civil war. The agreements that ended the war institutionalized the marginal position of Lebanon’s female population, leaving a woman’s personal status to her designated religious confession and the state of women’s rights in Lebanon stagnating.

Despite the sophistication of Lebanese society and its relative openness, just a handful of women have held elected office. Only 230 of the nearly 10,000 officials elected to municipal office in May 2004 are women and just three out of 128 MPs – 2.3 percent – are women. As a result, few women see politics as a viable vehicle for public

service. Hundreds of service and advocacy organizations and several academic programs have therefore become the “voice” of women in Lebanon. Even the leaders of these groups would admit, however, that being represented by a non-governmental organization (NGO) does not replace actual political empowerment.

Building upon the momentum of recent elections in several countries in the region and recognizing that elections are fought not only on Election Day but also over the course of an entire electoral cycle, this program seeks to expose women political activists in the region to campaign and governance practices that have been successful around the world.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

During this reporting period, NDI conducted three major training workshops as part of its “Win with Women Campaign Schools” series:

- Lebanon Women Campaign School (February 24-26)
- Advanced Communication Skills Workshop (March 12-13)
- Levant Regional Women Campaign School (March 28-April 1)

NDI also plans to provide additional technical assistance to participants who will run for elected office in 2005 in the Levant region.

Lebanon Campaign School

NDI held an intensive three-day campaign school from February 24 to 26 for 73 women in Beirut to increase women’s political participation during the 2005 parliamentary election cycle. Participants came from all six governorates, representing the political, confessional, partisan and geographic diversity of Lebanon. The diverse range of participants meant that women found themselves in groups with other women from other districts, confessional sects, and opposing political movements.

Five experienced trainers led the sessions: Shannon O’Connell, veteran trainer and campaign operative and NDI’s Resident Director in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; David Dettman, former political consultant and candidate and NDI’s Resident Director in Ukraine; Lina Alameddine, NDI’s Training Program Manager in Lebanon; May Ahmar, NDI’s Translation Center coordinator; and Kelley Jones, legislative and advocacy expert, currently Director of NDI’s project to promote women’s suffrage in Kuwait.

**“As long as we know the
barriers to women, we can
bring them down.”**

Shannon O’Connell, Trainer

The school introduced basic campaign strategies and was the first in a series of three schools designed to impart skills and best practices to women intending to run for

office or work on a campaign. The curriculum was designed to expose participants to the fundamental elements of a modern political campaign:

- Conducting research
- Crafting a strategy
- Developing and delivering an effective message
- Targeting voters and implementing a high-impact voter contact plan
- Getting on a candidate list
- Fundraising
- Managing critical resources (time, money, information and volunteers)

Due to the large number of participants, women were divided into two groups based on skill and experience levels. The two groups ran concurrent sessions with simultaneous translation in each group where needed. Several workshops were held for the entire group, which was then split into small groups for various exercises.

Workshops emphasized experiential, hands-on learning, and all but one featured a small group or individual exercises. In order to increase learning retention and give participants a head start on their campaign planning, workshops incorporated the particulars of the participants' own campaigns whenever possible. For instance, participants did research assessment, voter targeting, and message development exercises based on their own districts and candidacies.

Lunch sessions featured speeches and question and answer periods with Lebanese experts on election law and journalism. Featured speakers included Ammar Abboud of the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), Kassem Kasir of Al-Mustaqbal newspaper and Leena Saidi of the British Broadcast Corporation and the International Herald Tribune. Breaks throughout the day, as well as small group exercises, gave participants the chance to network.

Advanced Communications Skills Workshop

On March 12 and 13, NDI organized a two-day workshop titled "Advanced Communications Skills" for women likely to run for a seat in Parliament. The workshop provided participants with the skills and techniques necessary to successfully craft and articulate a compelling message, with a focus on public speaking and working with the media. A total of 13 women from across the Lebanese political spectrum attended the training. NDI communications expert Cathy Allen led the workshop. Allen has worked on over 500 successful political campaigns across the world and co-founded the Center for Women and Democracy at the University of Washington.

The advanced communications skills workshop focused on:

- Message development and delivery
- Recruitment of volunteers
- Fundraising

- Receiving endorsements
- Answering tough questions (from the media or political opponents)
- Personal presentation

Following each training session, interactive message development and presentation exercises were conducted, providing potential women candidates with the opportunity to gain simulated experience. Participants drafted speeches and presented them to demonstrate the skills they had acquired and receive constructive criticism from their peers. Throughout the training, participants were encouraged to stay on message and remain confident, approachable and serious. The NDI team noted significant improvements in the participants' communications skills and observed positive shifts in behavior and performance from one exercise to the next.

**“I was not going to run for office because I was feeling discouraged.
After attending the Advanced Communications Skills workshop,
I am determined to go forward as a candidate.”**

Dr. Ghada El-Yafi, participant in the Advanced Communications Skills Workshop

Levant Regional Women's Campaign School

From March 28 to April 1, NDI conducted the Levant Regional Campaign School in Amman, Jordan. The event provided 80 potential women candidates and campaign activists from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank/Gaza with the skills necessary to wage professional and credible campaigns. The Levant Regional Campaign School was the third in a series of regional campaign schools supported by NDI. The first two campaign schools, held last year in Qatar and Tunisia, trained over 100 women from the Gulf and Maghreb regions respectively.

Eight experienced trainers led the campaign school: Shannon O'Connell, NDI's Resident Director in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; David Dettman, NDI's Resident Director in Ukraine; Lina Alameddine, NDI's Training Program Manager in Lebanon; Staci Haag, NDI's Resident Senior Program Officer for Women's Political Participation in Iraq; Kristin Haffert, NDI's Women's Political Participation Program Manager in Washington DC; David Rose, Deputy Leader of the Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland and a specialist in democratic and transformation processes in conflict regions; Craig Varoga, veteran political strategist and CEO of the campaign strategies firm Varoga & Rice; and Phyllis Dunham, Regional Director for the Sierra Club, an environmental group based in Austin, Texas.

Guest speakers included Dr. Munther Share, Jordan's Minister of Political Development; David Hale, Chargé D'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Jordan; Amina Ouchelh, Member of Parliament from Morocco; Zainab Fayzey, Member of Parliament from Egypt; and Dr. Rola Dashti, a leading activist in the women's suffrage movement in

Kuwait. Other speakers included a regional roundtable of women journalists based in Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The school introduced basic campaign strategies and was designed to give both potential candidates and political activists with varying degrees of political experience exposure to the fundamental elements of political and advocacy campaigns. While participants were assigned to one of three following tracks - Running Winning Campaigns, Advanced Communication Skills and Political Advocacy – all of them attended training sessions focusing on:

“My political experience wasn’t enough. The trainers provided me with a methodological and scientific base to promote my planning”

Participant, Levant Regional Women’s Campaign School

- Fundraising
- Message and media
- Campaign strategy and organization
- Research
- Voter targeting
- Voter contact

NDI also offered optional sessions on:

- Strategic Planning
- Working with political parties
- Tools for building your party
- Win With Women: the Global Campaign
- Campaigns and technology
- Political advocacy

Over the course of the five-day school, participants practiced hands-on political skills on the topics mentioned above in addition to attending lectures. At the close of each training day, participants evaluated the sessions by completing a short survey designed to elicit their feedback on the day’s content, materials, trainers, organization, logistics, and participants. The evaluation form prompted them to think about what they had found most useful during the day, what actions they intended to take based on the day’s activities, and what they would change or improve.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective #1: *Provide potential women candidates and campaign activists from the Middle East and North Africa with exposure to the skills necessary to wage professional and credible campaigns at the national, regional, or local level*

- The Lebanon Campaign School provided potential Lebanese women candidates and activists with exposure to the fundamental elements of a modern political

campaign including: conducting research, crafting a strategy, developing and delivering an effective message, targeting voters and implementing a high-impact voter contact plan, fundraising, and managing critical resources.

- The Advanced Communications Skills Workshop provided potential Lebanese women candidates and activists with the skills and techniques necessary to successfully craft and articulate a compelling message, as well as working effectively with the media. Potential women candidates participated in simulation exercises to illustrate a number of skills including: recruiting volunteers, fundraising, receiving endorsements, answering tough questions, and presenting oneself as a candidate to the public.
- The Levant Regional Campaign School introduced basic campaign strategies and provided potential candidates and political activists from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and West Bank/Gaza exposure to the fundamental elements of political and advocacy campaigns. Participants took part in hands-on political skills to enhance their respective abilities to run effective campaigns.

Objective #2: *Expose political activists and potential candidates to models of good governance and coalition building to allow them to be effective advocates for democratic change*

- The schools provided women with a unique networking opportunity, allowing participants to meet with other political activists from across the Middle East, members of the media, civil society organizations and political parties to share experiences and offer expertise.
- Interactive exercises led by experienced trainers in Lebanon and Jordan provided experiential, hands-on learning on coalition building and advocacy for greater involvement of women in politics.

V. EVALUATION

During this reporting period, NDI organized three largely successful campaign schools in support of women's political participation in Lebanon and the Levant region as a whole. Participants generally expressed their intention to receive additional assistance from NDI during their actual electoral campaigns. Most participants also expressed their desire to maintain contact with their peers, an important goal that the schools sought to achieve.

Participants in the Lebanon Women's Campaign School indicated that they were able to absorb the campaign ideas, strategies and skills imparted by NDI. While all trainers were highly rated, as were their respective sessions, presentations given during lunch breaks received mixed reviews. Although NDI intended to make most use of the time at hand, many participants felt it was difficult to focus on the ideas being conveyed as people were eating. In addition, many women thought the sessions were not long

enough and requested the use of more specific examples pertaining to Lebanon to be included in future training curricula. As a final point, participants commended the level of organization and preparation put into the campaign school, and voiced their enthusiasm in attending future NDI workshops.

Participants in the Advanced Communications Skills Workshop indicated that the methods used for message development and delivery were highly valuable. However, several women felt that the challenges of formulating a message in Arabic were not addressed. While participants appreciated the trainers' expertise, they indicated that they would have preferred to have fewer but longer training sessions.

The evaluation questionnaires confirmed that participants were highly engaged in the Levant Regional Campaign School. Respondents cited dozens of examples of skills they found useful, and laid out plans to apply those skills in their respective campaigns. Participants were also consistent in their calls for more training sessions tailored to specific countries and more Arabic-speaking trainers.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

During the next reporting period, NDI will provide one-on-one consultations and technical assistance to program participants planning to run for elected office in the near future. NDI would pay particular attention to women candidates in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip who are currently preparing for legislative elections scheduled in the coming weeks and months. NDI would focus some of its trainings on political alliances and networking to help women get on candidate lists.